

# Suburban Life



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## Afternoon at salon mixes glamour, glasnost

By Louise Okrutsky  
staff writer

IT COULD HAVE BEEN a scene right out of a Norman Rockwell painting. A mother and teenage daughter spending Saturday afternoon having their hair done at the neighborhood beauty salon.

But for Ludmila Erpert, 34 and her daughter, Julia, 15 it wasn't just a matter of getting a haircut and a

perm. It was a glimpse of everyday life in the U.S.

Ludmila, her husband Edward Erpert and Julia have toured the country early November when they left their town of Kazan in the Tatar Republic, part of what once was the Soviet Union.

Now on the last leg of a journey that ends in early February, the Ludmila and Julia sat in the back of a Farmington Hills hair salon pouring over photos of different hairstyles.

Ludmila worried about the effect a perm would have on her hair already damaged by one she received back home. Robin Wheeler's small but cozy salon, House of Style, offered a startling contrast to the one Ludmila patronizes in Kazan.

In what amounts to large state-owned hair styling factories, customers take their chances with the results. Stylists don't really listen to their customers' requests.

"People always come back and tell them they did not do it right," Ludmila says.

HARSH CHEMICALS used in Russian permanents, dry out customers' hair and force beauticians to use rubber gloves to protect their hands, she said.

"After they're finished you're hair doesn't feel real," she said.

Her dark hair was brittle and felt dry. She was growing out her last Russian permanent and had vowed never to get another one. After seeing and touching the hair of her Detroit area host, Maggie Anderson of Redford, she changed her mind.

Hairdresser and shop owner Robin Wheeler gave Ludmila a perm designed for damaged hair. Ludmila's chin length hair was swept off her face and combed into soft waves in the back.

Jafra consultant Dagmar Landsmann of Farmington Hills, treated mother and daughter to a cleansing facial, followed by a moisturizer. Ludmila had her make-up



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Before their make-overs, Ludmila Erpert (top left), 34, was trying to grow out a permanent she received back home in Tatar Republic. Julia Erpert (top right), 15, had straight chin

length hair. Four hours later, mother and daughter (below) show off their new American looks.



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Julia Erpert peeks out from behind a towel as Robin Wheeler applies a permanent solution to her hair.



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Ludmila Erpert (seated) checks her daughter, Julia's new spiral permanent at the House of Style in Farmington Hills.



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## New director takes charge at Community Center

By Louise Okrutsky  
staff writer

Rosalie DeGregorio's ready to take on the challenge of guiding the Farmington-Farmington Hills Community Center.

After more than 20 years as executive director of the Dearborn Crisis Center, DeGregorio's ready for a change of pace.

"It was a real tough decision, but it was time," she said. Her old position required her to be on continually on call.

At the crisis center, she developed a 24-hour rape and domestic violence program, medical and legal clinics and individual and group counseling workshops.

"Working at the crisis center, on call, I put 100 percent into it. I didn't have too much time for other things," she said when asked about her outside interests.

DEGREGORIO, A licensed social worker, is studying for a degree in business and human resources.

A longtime Dearborn resident, she was looking through the Sunday paper's real estate section for a house in this area when she saw an ad for the community center job.

Now she has the \$28,000 a year position at the center but still hasn't found the house she wants, a ranch on a one-acre lot.

She was charmed by the center's late Victorian facade and its

grounds. That peaceful exterior is at odds with some of the unsettling questions surrounding the center's survival into the next century.

Although the center is operating in the black, in recent years it has faced budget problems. As a non-profit organization, it doesn't receive money from the city. It relies on donations and income from its programs and the rental of the property for social and business events.

One of DeGregorio's main goals is to continue soliciting donations for the center. It's a big challenge in tough economic times when donations to cultural and community activities dwindle.

RENOVATIONS TO the 6,400-square-foot building helped increase the center's desirability as a wedding and banquet facility.

"We depend on rentals quite a bit. There's been an increase of rentals from the past couple of years," she said.

Through the years, the center's suffered in competition with city offered programs. DeGregorio's immediate predecessor, Dorothy Pfaff resigned last year, complaining that the city's parks and recreation division took ideas for programs from the community center.

Efforts are being made to alleviate the situation.

"We're taking an overall look at the programs. We're meeting with

the people offering similar programs to see if anything can be worked out," she said.

After only three weeks as executive director of the center, DeGregorio isn't making any hasty changes in its programming. She'd like to see an emphasis placed on programs appealing to children, teens and possibly older adults.

In recent years, the center has tried to solve the duplication problem by finding a new niche for itself as a community cultural institution. That led to the construction of a \$65,000 band shell. After the first concert in 1989, neighbor's complaints about noise prompted Farmington Hills to limit amplified events at the center's outdoor amphitheatre. Last September, the council rescinded the restriction.

"I intend to run the center to its full extent within the law," DeGregorio said in a written statement. "I'm also looking into grant dollars to research on how to abate the noise problem."

Her position with the crisis center gave her plenty of experience in dealing with neighborhood concerns. "The neighbors were concerned with the types of clients we had," she said. Many of those clients had drug-related problems.

Like her predecessors, DeGregorio prides the community center's staff. "They're so exuberant," she says.



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Rosalie DeGregorio took charge of the Farmington Community Center almost one month ago. She aims to keep the center a community cultural institution.